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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan

Letter dated 8 September 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, dated 31 August 2015, in connection with the so-called "elections" to the "self-governing bodies" of the puppet separatist regime, to be held in the Nagorno-Karabagh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan on 13 September 2015 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 33 and 38, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yashar **Aliyev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 8 September 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

31 August 2015

According to press reports, the so-called "elections" to the "self-governing bodies" of the puppet separatist regime in the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan will be held on 13 September 2015.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan reiterates in this regard that the separatist regime established by Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan is ultimately nothing other than the product of aggression and racial discrimination; it is under Armenia's direction and control and survives by virtue of its military, political, financial and other support, as was confirmed recently by the European Court of Human Rights in its judgement of 16 June 2015 in the case of *Chiragov and others v. Armenia*.

It is well known that Armenia unleashed the war and used force against Azerbaijan, occupied almost one fifth of its territory, including the Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven adjacent districts, carried out ethnic cleansing of the seized areas by expelling about 1 million Azerbaijanis from their homes and committed other serious crimes during the conflict. The international community has consistently deplored, in the strongest terms, the use of military force against Azerbaijan and the resulting occupation of its territories, as reflected in Security Council resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), thus rejecting any actions violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and refusing to recognize as legitimate the situation created through such actions.

The holding of the so-called "elections" is yet another clear manifestation that, by undertaking consistent measures to maintain the status quo, consolidate the results of its occupation policy and annexationist aspirations, Armenia is not genuinely interested in seeking a political settlement of the armed conflict and, instead, pursues the path of provocations and escalation.

Against the background of continuing military occupation and ethnic cleansing of the territories of Azerbaijan, this mock "election" exercise constitutes a clear violation of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the norms and principles of international law and, therefore, shall have no legal effect whatsoever.

Armenia's policy of attempted annexation of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan has no chance of succeeding. The only way to achieve a durable and lasting conflict settlement is to ensure the unconditional and complete withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from the Nagorno-Karabakh region and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan, as the Security Council demands in its above-mentioned resolutions, and the exercise by the forcibly displaced Azerbaijani population of its inalienable right to return to their homes and properties in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and adjacent districts. This conflict can be resolved only on the basis of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized borders. No peace settlement of the conflict can be

reached which violates the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and is inconsistent with international law. No acquisition of territory by force shall ever be recognized by the international community as lawful. Never shall Azerbaijan reconcile with the seizure of its territories. The military occupation of the territory of Azerbaijan does not represent a solution and shall never produce a political outcome desired by Armenia.

The Republic of Azerbaijan calls on all members of the international community, in line with their obligations under international law, not to recognize as lawful the situation resulting from the occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan, nor render aid or assistance in maintaining that situation and take effective measures in that regard.

Armenia must drop its futile attempts to mislead its own people and the wider international community, cease its policy of annexation and ethnic cleansing, engage constructively in the conflict settlement process and comply with its international obligations.

The responsibility for the consequences of any action which the Republic of Azerbaijan may be obliged to take in connection with the continued illegal presence of the Armenian armed forces and unlawful activities in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan in order to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders will lie entirely with the Republic of Armenia.